National Institute of Metalworking Skills Precision Machining

The Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROCP) Unit of the California Department of Education and the metalworking industry cooperatively developed an ROCP 2000 statewide course outline for certification and designed a standards-based curriculum design. Statewide course approvals allow ROCPs automatic certification for the first year of operation. After the first year, normal operational requirements will apply. This course, National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) Precision Machining, is developed using skill standards developed by the nonprofit National Institute for Metalworking Skills, Inc. organization. An ad hoc advisory committee composed of educators and industry representatives met to work out details. The standards based outline is modular and has been designed for implementation with school schedules. The course varies from 180 hours to 1,080 hours annually. Program certification will be a part of the implementation strategy. Academic and essential employability skills are integral to the curriculum design, and cooperative vocational education and community classroom instructional methodologies will be encouraged.

NIMS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

What is NIMS?
NIMS is a national nonprofit organization formed in 1995 to support the development of a skilled workforce for the metalworking industry. NIMS support is accomplished through four programmatic activities: (1) developing, writing, validating, and maintaining skill standards for each industry within metalworking; (2) certifying programs that instruct to the skill standards and meet NIMS quality requirements; (3) credentialing the skills of individuals against the skill standards through performance and written assessments; and (4) assisting states, schools, and companies to form partnerships to implement the skill standards, achieve program certification, and credential trainees and workers.

Who organized NIMS?
A consortium of metalworking trade associations, national labor organizations, and a council of state governors, companies, and educators created NIMS. The consortium began the process of developing skill standards and credentialing assessments in late 1992.

Why certify educational training programs to NIMS standards?
NIMS programs bring together educators, companies, and workers and define, through skill standards, the skills and competencies the metalworking industry wants and needs. Skill standards also provide educators with a valuable tool to maintain, develop, and update their curricula. NIMS certification status will provide educational institutions with a powerful advertising tool for attracting new enrollments and increase placement of graduates. Student achievements can be certified through the nationally recognized credentialing program and standards accepted and promoted by the metalworking industry.

How will this work for your program?
It provides a tool to assist in developing, maintaining, and updating your curriculum with a structured career pathway and career advancement opportunities for students. The course also provides the metalworking industry with better-focused and prepared students using school-

industry partnerships. As an advertising tool to help increase enrollment in career preparation program and aids in placing graduates. Students can earn credentials in skill standards that are recognized nationwide.

How do the NIMS programs work?
The requirements focus on accuracy, consistency, safety, knowledge, problem solving, individual competence, team participation, and demonstrated performance. These qualities foster productivity. When individuals earn credentials and receive recognition, their self-esteem and pride in workmanship are boosted and morale is increased. Program success is enhanced as students earn nationally recognized credentials.

As schools organize their curricula to bring students up to meeting the standards so they can earn credentials, employers have greater assurance in knowing the job applicant's ability level. The credential can be matched to the skill standards regardless of the program the applicant has attended because the skill standards and credentialing requirements are the same nationwide.

What is a NIMS credential?
A NIMS credential is recognition that a person's competencies have been validated against a set of industry-written skill standards. Skill validation involves meeting the performance requirements and passing an examination of knowledge skills required for the credential. The performance requirements and examination are the same nationwide. Therefore, the credential is portable.

Credentialing requirements are set for groupings of job duties and thus are modular. Taken as a whole, the credentialing modules define a career path within a metalworking industry and, in many cases, across metalworking processes. The modular aspect helps schools counsel students about opportunities and communicates that skill and knowledge acquisition in metalworking is a continuing endeavor.

What does program certification involve?
The purpose of certifying the metalworking program is to improve the quality of instruction and foster partnerships between educators and, the industry. NIMS sets standards for program content; equipment, tooling, and measuring devices inventory; instructor qualifications; and participation by advisory bodies. A self-evaluation form focusing on NIMS-desired program content must be completed. The school must also complete an on-site evaluation of its training program, facilities, instructors, and administration. NIMS does not specify curriculum or endorse curricular products and does not provide metalworking training.

What is the process for on-site evaluations?
NIMS forms a review team that will make a two-day on-site evaluation. The first day is usually spent reviewing the facilities and noted documentation, observing students at work, and interviewing instructors and administrators. The second day involves interviews with employers in the program area, interviews with advisory committee members, and final discussions with instructors and administration.